

DOC works round the lock,

Story and photo by
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BAD KREUZNACH, Germany—Imagine working in an office with no windows, where the only decorations on the fading white walls are maps charting the division's troop and vehicle movements, where the shelves are lined with books, manuals and binders containing protocols for every possible situation the division could encounter. Imagine working a 12-hour shift without knowing whether you will battle constant boredom or tackle a major crisis. Imagine having to punch in a security code to open a two-ton steel door just to enter your office. That's an average workday in the 1st Armored Division's Operations Center.

Very little, if anything, happens within the division without the DOC knowing or having something to do with it. The DOC is one of the few sections in the division that operates 24 hours a day.

"Working in the DOC is one of the most stressful, but also critical and challenging jobs a soldier will ever have," said Staff Sgt. Darwin K. Ammons. "It gives [those soldiers] a valuable insight into every facet of the division. We are the eyes and ears of the commanding general and his staff. We face the daily challenge of sustaining almost flawless standards. There is no such thing as a small mistake in the DOC. Every decision we make has an effect on the rest of the division."

The DOC deals with every kind of situation from delivering Red Cross messages to ensuring that soldiers have all the proper clearances in order to

deploy to Kosovo, to updating unit alert rosters and keeping the commanding general informed on all that is happening within the division. During deployments they track every unit down to company-size elements, sometimes even smaller.

"Information flow is the most critical thing in the DOC," said Ammons. "It is not necessarily that the information originates from here. This is the central point. This is the hub for the division. Anything that happens in the division goes through here one way or another because anything that happens in the division is initiated by an operations order. Those operations orders are distributed [to the division] from this office. [The commanding general] can do some things that would just astound you, but he needs the proper information to get those things done."

Working in the DOC can be advantageous to a soldier because it

gives them a completely different view of how the division operates, according to Ammons.

"It gives you a great overview to how the division runs in relation to unit missions, operations orders, tasking, planning, training and critical message traffic," said Ammons. "Working in the DOC is a great responsibility in that most of the things that happen in our office we are not allowed to talk about with fellow soldiers or our spouses."

Since working in the DOC is not a specific Army career specialty, the staff relies on on-the-job training. The DOC staff uses what little downtime they have for extra training in how to handle the various responsibilities of their jobs.

Working in the DOC also has its disadvantages. The staff works an ever-changing schedule. The soldiers usually work six 12-hour shifts, from 7 a.m. to

keeps 1AD running

7 p.m., followed by three days off. They then work six 12-hour shifts, from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., then have three days off.

"The biggest disadvantage of working in the DOC has to be missing family time on the weekends and at night. I saw my kids for about two and a half hours last night," said Staff Sgt. Dianna L. Santiago, a member of the DOC staff.

"Even though the hours are long, hard and arduous, the guys here can pretty much count on when they are going to get time off," said Ammons. "We treat that as sacred. They work so hard that we try not to touch that time off whenever possible."

The staff works at a fast, and often stressful, pace.

"This is the highest [operational

tempo] that I have seen since I was in Albania and Kosovo," said Ammons. "Most units do not have the tempo that we have or can have on a regular basis. We have a saying in the DOC: 'When everything is going great, we never hear anything. Everything is quiet. But when things go wrong there are only nuclear rounds here.'"

The intensity of work and the high op tempo has helped form a strong camaraderie within the DOC staff to the point where many of them consider each other almost family. When one of the soldiers needs to run an errand while they are on shift, they can usually count on a coworker to cover for them.

For all the work the DOC staff does, few within the division see what they do, or know that they are

there. A secret security clearance is required just to enter the vault they call an office.

While the DOC staff does a lot of work to help the commanding general and his staff run the division, they are also there for the soldiers. Whether it is on a weekend or a holiday, during a deployment or during a temporary duty assignment the DOC is the one place in the 1st Armored Division that a soldier can call at any time of the day and know that they will get an answer. They maintain a toll-free number for soldiers to call in the case of emergency.

"Our soldiers get little to no credit for what they do but they do an outstanding job everyday," said Ammons. "We are like the shadow warriors of the division. We are always here but never seen."



Staff Sgt. Darwin K. Ammons punches in the secret code to access the mysterious domain hidden behind the door to the DOC.

Uncle Sam wants you....

The 1st Armored Division's Public Affairs Office has reinstated a program to ensure that all units throughout the division footprint receive the recognition they deserve. The Public Affairs Office cannot do this alone, so we are asking for your assistance.

All units are encouraged to participate in the Unit Writers Program. This program depends on the active participation from the brigades, separate battalions, companies and family support groups.

Just send the stories and photos of the events you would like to see featured in the "Ironside" for publication or posting on the website for worldwide viewing.

All stories submitted should be timely and focused on people accomplishing the mission or contributing to quality of life. Stories about family support groups are also acceptable for publication.

Some people like to write while others enjoy photography. The Ironside always has

room for outstanding photos.

These photos need to be a minimum of 200dpi; optimal size is 300dpi. The magazine can accept color and black and white photos.

Keeping people informed not only boosts morale, but also keeps everyone informed on what's going on throughout the communities.

Here are some basic guidelines for unit writers and photographers:

- All stories submitted need to include the name, rank and unit of the person writing the story. You should also include a phone number and e-mail address, if available, so we can contact you if we have questions.

- Keep everything simple and direct.

- Use short sentences.

- A sentence that runs longer than 25 words is probably too long. Paragraphs run no more than for each soldier mentioned in the story.

- All stories need quotes and every quote

should include the complete name of those attributed.

- Photos should include both eyes and the hands of the subject(s).

- The action should be easily identified.

- If possible, the division patch or other unit identifier should be easy to see.

- All photos require a caption with a full name (who), unit, what is taking place, where it's happening, date (when) and for what reason, if applicable

Deadline for submissions is the 15th of each month. Stories and photos can be mailed to the 1st AD Public Affairs Office, ATTN: AETV-THE-A, Ironside Editor, Unit 24309, APO AE 09252.

Stories can also be e-mailed to the Ironside Editor, Cpl. G. Withrow at withrowg@hq.1ad.army.mil or faxed to DSN 490-6379, or commercial at 0671-609-6379.